A Soldier FOR the Crown

By: Charles Johnson

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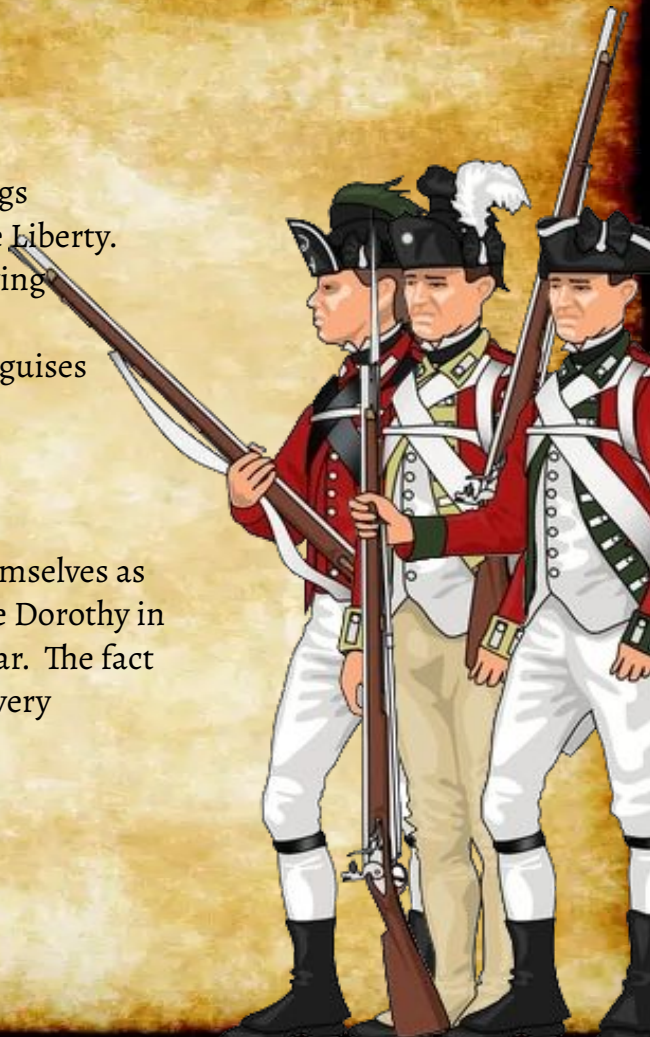
At the beginning of the story, the main character is on a boat to New York reminiscing about the gamble they made as a slave. They were 15 when their older brother Titus and cousin Caesar were planning to flee to the army after learning that slaves will be pardoned if they joined. They convinced the 2 boys to take them as well with all of them changing their names, the main character's to Alexander Freeman. The three of them served His Majesty's army for years before Titus died, like many men before, to smallpox that spread throughout the camp. After that, the main character considered giving up and switching sides to Washington's army with the promises of "...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", but Caesar stopped them saying Washington was lying. One month later, Caesar died from the rebel's cannon fire on the village they were staying in. This caused the main character to finally snap and running away, however, they ended up in Camden for the battle that was going to take place there. In the end, they managed to survive the battle, albeit with a fractured shoulder from a cannon ball, with the war winding down soon after with the main character receiving the British pass to leave the country. At the end, back on the boat, it is revealed the main character's original name was Dorothy, a girl this whole time.

Key Points

- All blacks will be freed from slavery if they join the British army
- The main character is a gambler with them gambling on various different things
- Titus's changed his name to John Free with Caesar also changing his to George Liberty.
- It is revealed at the beginning, while on the boat, Dorothy saw other slaves trying to swim to the ship when it's leaving the harbor
- The army liberated slaves they found who ran away from their owners with disguises they stole.



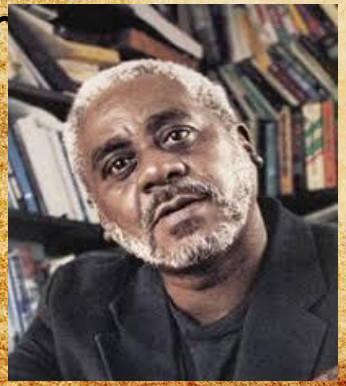
Connections

This story, *A Soldier of the Crown*, reminds of another woman who disguised themselves as man to join the army. Her name was Christian "Kit" Cavanagh. She wasn't like Dorothy in trying to be freed from slavery, no, she did it to find her missing husband at war. The fact that these 2 women in varying circumstances resorted to the same strategy is very interesting indeed.

Research & background information - Keily

About charles johnson

- Charles johnson writes this to confront the effects of race and racism.
- He is known for his exploration of culture, race, identity, and freedom.
- Directly addresses issues of black life in ar



Story information

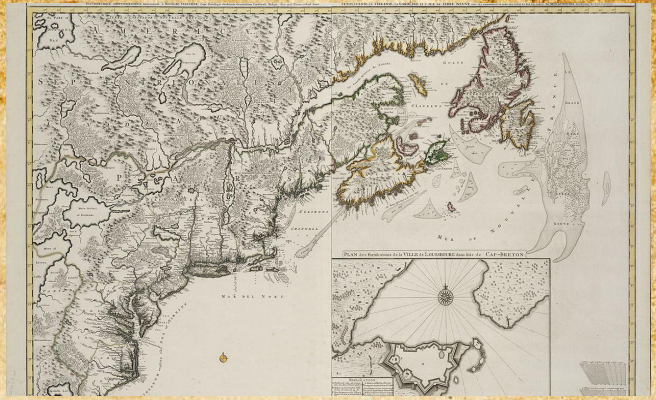
- Dorothy, our main character, is based on enslaved individuals who fought on british frontlines in hopes of freedom.
- Deed of manumission - the act of a slave owner directly freeing his slaves
- Black men in british uniforms had writing inscribed on their uniform across their chest saying, 'LIBERTY TO SLAVES'

Illustration of a Black loyalist with the words "LIBERTY TO SLAVES" on his uniform

Research & background information - Keily

Historical context

- Takes place in the 18th century.
- Around the time of the the American revolution.
- Draws examples from things during the war such as black loyalists.
- African Americans were being promised freedom for military service.
- Loyalists were freed and resettled in Nova Scotia, Canada after the war.
- Ships with slaves on them were departing from New york to Nova Scotia.
- Nova Scotia is a providence in canada which was formerly a british colony.
- The book of Blacks documented, named, and described 3000 black loyalists who were granted passage to Nova Scotia.



Map of Nova Scotia during the American Revolution.

Loyalists fighting on the front lines.

Literary luminary

"So would the redcoats. Both sides need us, but I don't trust neither one to play fair when this thing is over. They can do that Declaration over. Naw, the words I want to see are on a British pass with my name on it. I'm stayin' put 'til I see that." Pg.162 paragraph 8)

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," (Pg.161 paragraph 7)

"Can you go back to the kitchen and sneak out some provisions for us?"(Pg. 160 paragraph 3)

Travel Tracer

The setting of the story start off during the American Revolution with a sister which is the protagonist and her brother as well as her cousin outside a barn ready to flee from their masters by horse

At the end the only one who is able to find success in earning their freedom is Dorothy the female protagonist which finds herself on the ship traveling to Nova Scotia

The group makes it to British camp where there they join the army in order to earn their freedom

Eduardo Lugo

Vocab

(Pg 161) Capacities: Ability to hold or have something -“Over the first months, then years of the seesawing war, you, Titus, and Caesar served His Majesty’s more capacities”

(Pg 161) Belatedly: Done too late or overdue-“Or perhaps you and Caesar might switch sides, deserting to the ranks of General Washington who, pressured for manpower, belatedly reversed his opposition”

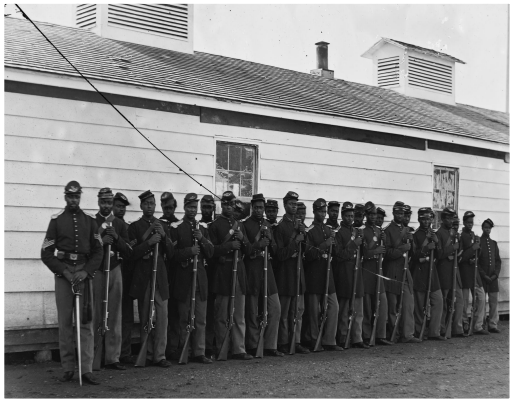
(Pg 161) Unalienable: Impossible to be taken away-“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”

(Pg 162) Elusive: Take away difficult to find-“But, miraculously, as the war began to wind down, you were given the elusive, long-coveted British pass.”

Eduardo Lugo

Izabela Leal: Connector

The soldier of the crown related to some of my own experiences because Freeman wants to be free. I think in some ways I want to be free too. Alexander Freeman changes her whole identity, gender, and joins the army. This relates to me because I think about starting fresh somewhere else or joining the navy. Alexander is running away from slavery and wants her freedom. I want a new beginning and more opportunities. I think Freeman and I both want similar things, with both of us feeling trapped. School and slavery are not similar, but Freeman and I are both struggling in our own ways. I would like to escape this environment and learn somewhere new. I don't want to continue to be in a place that isn't benefiting me and just putting me down. Alexander Freeman understands wanting to move on and do better things. Rather than sitting down and being in the same position everyday like a cycle.

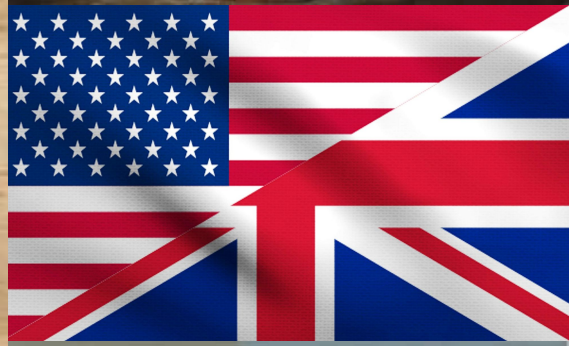


Steven Vargas : Questioner

After reading the story “A Soldier for the Crown” These are the questions I came up with:

What is the main conflict faced by the protagonist?

How does the setting of the story influence the characters actions and decisions?

How does the protagonist view of the crown change throughout the story/war

What happened towards the end of the story? What happens to Alexander?